



## Memorandum

**To:** Elections Commission  
**From:** John Arntz, Director  
**Date:** February 12, 2021  
**RE:** Director's Report: February 17, 2021, Elections Commission Meeting

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Following is a brief listing of the work and related information in which the Department of Elections (Department) has been engaged since the previous report issued in relation to the Elections Commission meeting on December 16, 2020.

### I. The Department continues to carry out various administrative activities and processes.

- A. In consideration of the latest Shelter-in-Place Order issued by the San Francisco Health Officer, the Department transitioned most of its year-round employees to telecommuting. In the near future, most employees will continue to work remotely, with 2 employees now at City Hall every weekday, as well as between 4-10 additional staff at City Hall and between 1-2 additional staff at the warehouse working on an as-needed basis.
- B. The Department submitted its Racial Equity Action Plan, Phase 1, to the Office of Racial Equity and posted a copy of the Plan on a newly created page on its website, <https://sfelections.sfgov.org/2021-2023-racial-equity-action-plan-department-elections>, as mandated by the Ordinance No. 188-19.
  - i. The Department has developed a presentation to familiarize all of its employees with the goals established in the Racial Equity Action Plan. This presentation has been posted on the Department's Employee Resource Portal that can be conveniently accessed by any Department employee.
  - ii. This month, the Department will convene remote meetings with members of its Racial Equity Team—a working group comprised of Department senior management and direct service employees who share decision-making authority and knowledge in service, human resources, and budget areas—to review projects to be initiated in the first quarter of 2021 and to discuss implementation timelines.
  - iii. The Office of Racial Equity indicated that it would be evaluating City Department plans during January and February.
- C. The Department prepared its budget proposals for the next two fiscal years (FY), detailing expected fixed costs and variable operating expenses as well as any anticipated revenue or revenue recoveries, and submitted the proposals for review by the Budget and Oversight of Public Elections Committee on January 29.
  - i. The Department's budget proposals for FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23 were developed with the goal of striking a balance between supporting the City in its efforts to close a projected budget shortfall and continuing to deliver essential elections services to City residents while advancing the Department's strategic goals: (1) Provide fully equitable and accessible registration, outreach, and voting services to all eligible San Francisco residents; (2) Strengthen collaboration with community-based organizations and city agencies to provide meaningful voter education; (3) Incorporate the impact of racial equity and vulnerable population issues into service, staffing, and budget decisions; and (4) Support the City's Redistricting Task Force, and then update voter rolls and align precinct lines with new district lines.

- ii. The Department was able to meet the mandatory target efficiency reductions equal to 7.5% as requested by the Mayor. For the Department, such reductions correspond to \$504,347 in each fiscal year. The Department intends to meet these target reductions through a combination of reallocating current staffing resources, rebalancing its already approved FY 2021-22 budget, identifying areas of operations in which the introduction of efficiencies would be feasible (e.g., incorporating remote hiring and training strategies, leveraging the skills and experience of the Department's workforce to perform services that were previously contracted out such as translations of election materials, the redrawing of San Francisco's precinct lines, etc.), and aligning its projected expenses more closely with certain anticipated characteristics of upcoming elections such as voter turnout, ballot length, etc.
  - D. The Department has been preparing additional training for its employees on how to stay safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19, to meet the requirements of the training required by the emergency regulations adopted by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA).
    - i. As required by regulations, this training will address topics such as where and how to report positive test results, what steps are being taken to protect employees from exposures to COVID-19, where should COVID-19 concerns be reported, etc.
    - ii. This safety training will be delivered via a recorded presentation, allowing employees to review the presentation at their own pace and refer back to it whenever they need to refresh their knowledge on any of the topics covered in the training.
  - E. The Department is working on compiling reimbursement requests to recoup the costs for administering the San Francisco Unified School District, the Community College District, and the Bay Area Rapid Transit District elections that were consolidated with the November 3, 2020 election.
- II. **The Department continues to provide information to the general public and to undertake the many routine activities.**
  - A. The Department has been conducting in-person transactions in its office, by appointment only, and responding to public inquiries received though email and its main phone line on a daily basis.
  - B. The Department continues to process statewide ballot initiative petitions, including completing the raw count and random signature check.
  - C. The Department continues the many activities associated with the maintenance of the voter roll. These include the processing of registration affidavits received by mail, dropped off in person, or submitted online; updating voter records based on notification received through official sources, such as the USPS, Department of Motor Vehicles, and the state Department of Public Health; and other ongoing activities that ensure the continual accuracy of the voter roll in accordance with relevant laws. The Department continues to provide outreach, including mailing of voter notification cards and address confirmation postcards, to voters who register or update their information on file.
  - D. Departmental personnel are engaged in reviewing their divisional procedures, materials, and supporting applications to inform and improve the processes in future election cycles.

**III. The Department has been engaged in assisting the City with future elections planning.**

- A. The Department has been assessing the potential implementation of the Voter's Choice Act (VCA) in San Francisco, as required by the Ordinance No. 200400 enacted by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors last year. The

ordinance directs the Department to submit a written report to the Board of Supervisors as well as to the Elections Commission, "*regarding the potential implementation of the Voter's Choice Act in San Francisco for elections to be held in 2021 and thereafter*" by February 28, 2021.

- i. The Department has been working on the report to: 1) provide an overview of the VCA and discuss recent voting trends in San Francisco as well as the results of a recent survey conducted by the Department to solicit public feedback on potential adoption of the VCA elections model; 2) address the potential impact of the adoption of this new elections model on (a) voter outreach, education, and services; (b) staffing and staff training; (c) voting equipment and capacity; (d) ballot collection and processing; and (e) location and operation of potential vote centers; and 3) present budgetary projections and a tentative timeline for VCA implementation in San Francisco. The Department will submit the final report to the Board, with a copy to the Elections Commission, on Friday, February 26.
- ii. The VCA, or Senate Bill (SB) 450, was signed into law on September 29, 2016, adding section 4005 to the California Elections Code (CAEC), and allowing California counties to conduct "all-mail" elections with conditions detailed in CAEC §4005(a) et seq. Under the VCA, county elections officials must mail ballots to all actively registered voters, replace neighborhood polling places with a specific number of centralized vote centers, and maintain a specific number of ballot drop-off boxes.